

Relief

by 1Past and Present1

Category: Sonic the Hedgehog  
Genre: Friendship, Hurt-Comfort  
Language: English  
Characters: Rouge, Shadow  
Status: Completed  
Published: 2016-04-15 22:27:11  
Updated: 2016-04-15 22:27:11  
Packaged: 2016-04-27 17:24:47  
Rating: T  
Chapters: 1  
Words: 1,647  
Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)  
Summary: I'm here for you.

Relief

**\*\*Relief\*\***

Sitting in bed with the pillows piled high for support and a blanket pulled snugly all around, Shadow would normally draw out an affectionate chuckle from Rouge.

Hesitating in the doorway to his room, she merely bites her lip and picks with some embarrassment at the hem of her oversized T-shirt.

"Can I help you?" the hedgehog asks mildly from over the fine text of his book, which he no longer reads, his eyes instead on hers.

"I, uh," the bat mumbles in return. Almost blushing.

"Is something the matter?"

"No. Yes. Justâ€¦" Through her teeth she breathes reluctantly, "I had a bad dream. That's all."

His expression changes from curious to compassionate, in a very subtle, becoming way.

"I guessâ€¦ I wondered if you'dâ€¦ Errâ€¦"

Slowly, gently, he closes his book. It is heavy on his chest.

She reconsiders with a huff. "Never mind."

"Rougeâ€¦"

"It's okay." She shakes her head. "I'm being silly. Just forget it."

He blinks a few times.

"Sorry to bother you."

"Bother me?"

"Goodnight." She's about to turn away and leave.

"Wait."

She obeys, seemingly small in the doorway, unsure.

"I've had my fair share of nightmares under our roof," he begins carefully, after seconds of nothing. "Tell me. Have mine ever bothered you?"

"No," she answers readily.

"Well, there you have it."

"But you're different."

He cannot stop himself from twinging. It's as if something cold and hard has been plunged into his breast.

This time, she does turn away. But he speaks before she can take a step further.

"Do you remember the night I cried before you, for the first time?"

With her back to him, she stiffens.

He sees her nod faintly. "You held me that night. Without complaint. Do you remember doing that?"

"Yes," is the murmur, barely audible. "You'd seen Maria again. She was alive. But when you woke, she wasn't there anymore."

"You didn't bring it up again the next morning, or the morning thereafter. You let it go."

"I didn't want to upset you. Or embarrass you."

"So you played the hero. Acted like I never woke that night, screaming. To preserve my pride. Because that's the kind of woman you are. Many times I've woken, screaming. And you've always been there. Always pretending otherwise the next day, after all those nights of chasing the memories away. Preserving my pride."

She somehow stiffens further.

"All those nightmares, all these years." He sets his book aside on the low table and shifts himself to the farther edge of the bed. "You're intimately acquainted with my memories by now. And you have never complained."

"You're a man, Shadow. Having terrible memories doesn't make you any less of a man."

"That doesn't change anything." He's making space. "You've always been there. But, tonight, I didn't hear you scream. I wasn't aware that you were locked away in your mind, living a nightmare, perhaps reliving terrible memories. I wasn't there when you first woke up. How long did you lie in bed before you came to me? I should've been there. And I can only be here for you, now. In a way, I've failed you."

"No." She tightens her wings, a nervous habit. "I don't scream. It's not your fault. You couldn't have known."

"Perhaps. But it's not your fault, either, for failing to scream. You're strong. That's the kind of woman you are. And you've never asked me for comfort before. Yet, you say I've never bothered you."

She sways uneasily on her bare feet.

"You say it's because I'm different. Special. As if I deserve tender treatment from you. I'm no different, no more deserving, than you. And I can't stomach the thought of letting you down further, tonight, when I have a chance to be here for you. For the first time."

She hears a wavering in his voice and it makes her turn back to face him, finding his eyes glassy and intensely warm.

Wordlessly, he pats the open space in invitation.

"Youâ€¦" She chokes on her emotions. "You don't mind?"

"I don't." He smiles. "You're no bother to me, Rouge. Not after all those nightmares, all these years. All that tenderness."

"Shadowâ€¦"

"I know it's not much, my being here for you, now. It's not enough to pay you back. But, from now on, I'll keep an ear out for your bad dreams. Maybe, one night, I'll hear you. A murmur. Maybe, one night, I'll be there when you wake. Or be there to wake you up."

"My dream. Itâ€¦" She sniffs, then rubs the betraying show of emotion away with the back of her hand. "It was scary, Shadow."

"It's okay. You're safe and you're not alone."

She approaches, then comes to a stop beside the bed.

He shows no desire to push her away when she lays her hand cautiously on the covers.

"Are you sure? I mean, isn't this uncomfortable for you?"

"Your dream. It was scary."

"Yes."

He dispels her unease with, of all things, a wink. "Then let's face your fears as a team. Ally." The most stoically amusing, most out of character yet weirdly typical of himself, sort of wink. Like when Blaze smiles with more than the swish of her tail as a suggestion of a smile, or when Knuckles laughs a rich, deep laugh without concern for appearing foolish.

"That soundsâ€¦" Rouge finds herself grinning crookedly. "It is very difficult to say no to you, sometimes."

"I am rather convincing, aren't I?"

"You certainly are, handsome." She says this like she's so cool and suave, even when she's emotional and shudderingly grateful.

Shadow watches her slip under the covers. Feels the mattress shift to accommodate her weight, followed by the creeping reach of her bodily heat as she makes herself comfortable at his side. A welcomed invasion of his normally well-kept personal space.

"Thank you," she breathes, after several moments of their shared looks conveying so much.

"No need. Here." He pushes a pillow over to her. He smells her musk and the mint of her breath when she suddenly leans over and kisses his cheek in answer, blindly accepting the pillow through the kiss.

She lets herself linger against him. Then, with a quivering breath, she achingly eases herself apart from him.

"That was different."

"Was it?"

"You've kissed me before, but never like this."

"You're a great guy, is all I'm trying to say."

"You're great, too. Although, I'm not sure how to communicate that to you, with the same power."

"You could kiss me back."

"We're moving a little fast, perhaps?"

"Probably," she whispers, before remarking more loudly, more like the woman she portrays herself to be, "seeing how long it took you just to ask me into your bed. I was starting to lose hope, you know."

With their faces so close, he thinks how he could brush noses with her. "In this modern society," he replies evenly, "you could have asked first."

"That's very true." She seizes that opportunity and discards it when she lies back, drawing up the covers and gradually allowing herself to grow used to this closeness, visibly relaxing in it. After a while she adds huskily, "This is nice."

"It is."

"I think I gave you the better mattress."

He remains seated, gazing upon her intently and with his unusual brand of kindness.

For a while, nothing is said.

"Originally, I'd come here to talk, you know."

"I thought so."

"Thisâ€¦ This is certainly an unexpected turn of events. A wonderful turn. But unexpected."

"Would you like to talk, now?"

"Hmmâ€¦ Yes. But not about the bad dream."

His heart silently goes out to her when she, for a moment, lets him see her pain through a crack in her mask.

"Not right now. Not yet. Maybe, not ever."

"Okay."

She feels his hand find her shoulder, squeezing, then letting go.

"We're still facing your fears together, aren't we?"

"I'm not half as afraid as I was before."

"Good. It's a start." He speaks so gently, so amiably. "What would you like to talk about?"

"Your book. What were you reading, just now?"

"Poetry."

"Ah. Do you mind?"

"Go ahead."

She reaches for the book. Opens to a random page. Makes a sound of thought. "The Romantics."

"The epitome of manliness."

"Indeed." She turns pages. "The pastoral. An escape. We're repressing our urge to regress." For several minutes she reads.

"You're welcome to stay, if you want to."

Suddenly, she closes the book and gazes up at him. "That's awfully big of you to say."

"Not really. You've stayed up with me countless times."

"Yes, but I've never slept with you before."

He shrugs. "First time for everything, I suppose."

"Oh, you! Does this imply a second or maybe even a third time? We can count beyond three."

He mysteriously tucks the blanket beneath his chin.

"You give my imagination too much leeway." She offers him his book. "Wanna read to me? Help warm me up, handsome. Get me in the mood."

"For rolling meadows and bubbling brooks?"

"It's a start, right?"

After a moment he reaches across their shared space and takes the book gently from her.

Giving her an excuse to convey her more private feelings within the a brief touching of their hands, before she lets him go.

He opens the book to a random page, clears his throat, and begins.

She listens, internally imagining everything.

End  
file.